



Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service

Spring 2013

Illinois Climbs to No. 1 in the Nation's "Cities of Service" Rankings

Thanks to the outreach efforts of the Serve Illinois Commission, Illinois now has 22 Cities of Service, making it the top state in the nation. Participating cities include Chatham, Chicago, Columbia, East Moline, Elgin, Evanston, Forest Park, Glendale Heights, Hanover Park, Hoffman Estates, Island Lake, Joliet, Libertyville, Midlothian, Moline, Montgomery, North Chicago, O'Fallon, Salem, Silvis, Streamwood and Rock Island.



**CITIES OF
SERVICE**
CITIESOFSERVICE.ORG

Founded in New York City in 2009 by 17 mayors from across the nation, Cities of Service aims to create a vibrant network of municipal governments that leverage citizen service as a reliable, viable tool to achieve measurable impact on pressing local challenges. The coalition builds on the work of New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, who created the nation's first high-impact service plan in April 2009 and appointed the nation's first municipal chief service officer. By accelerating the service movement at the most local level — connecting local needs to the supply of willing volunteers in innovative and impactful new ways — Cities of Service aspires to create a new chapter in America's longstanding history of service while making local government more effective.

Today, the Cities of Service coalition includes more than 160 mayors, representing more than 50 million Americans. Like the founding mayors, each coalition member has made a commitment to work with other mayors around the country and advance service strategies in their own city by crafting a high-impact service plan.

The Commission aims to improve upon these numbers and showcase the willingness of many Illinoisans to serve while maintaining the No. 1 ranking for Cities of Service in America. To become a City of Service, the mayor must sign a Declaration of Service that highlights a commitment to community service and an intention to create a service plan for the city. There are no costs or requirements attached to becoming a City of Service and once registered, a city will be eligible for a portion of a multi-million dollar grant pool each year.

If you would like more information on Cities of Service, visit www.citiesofservice.org. To register as a City of Service in Illinois, contact Adam Weiner at adam.weiner@illinois.gov or at (312) 814-6777.



"The mission of the Serve Illinois Commission is to improve communities by supporting and enhancing volunteerism and instilling an ethic of service throughout the state."

To be added to the mailing list, please email DHS.ServeIllinois@Illinois.gov.

From the Executive Director



When you hear the word “infrastructure,” you generally think about bridges, buildings, railroad tracks and highways. Infrastructure represents the building blocks of a connected society and the foundation of communities. Just as first-rate physical infrastructure is critical to commerce, health and safety, the volunteer and service infrastructure is arguably just as critical to society’s progress and success.

In Illinois, 2.73 million of you volunteered in 2011. The more than 360 million hours you devoted to strengthening your communities through volunteerism was valued at \$8.1 BILLION. We are proud to have the highest volunteer rate of the country’s 10 largest states, a testament to our robust service infrastructure.

But just as physical infrastructure constantly requires restoration and reinforcement, our service ecosystem can always be enhanced. This is why we are calling on all mayors in Illinois to commit to join the Cities of Service network, thereby pledging to develop a community blueprint to harness the power of volunteers. To date, 22 Illinois mayors have signed on to this bipartisan coalition, making

us the national leader. But think about the possibilities if every mayor in Illinois signs on – not only will the \$8.1 billion figure rise dramatically, but our community resilience in Illinois will become unshakeable.

So call on your mayor and other elected leaders to rally behind the power of service, and tell your friends that they can always find a volunteer opportunity, more than 100,000 of them, at www.Serve.Illinois.gov.

Yours in service,

Brandon Bodor
Executive Director, Serve Illinois Commission

From the Chair



On a recent flight, I was reading an article about a wealthy gentleman who decided to bury a treasure. He collected gold and other valuables, hid the treasure (the treasure is still buried, to the best of his knowledge) and wrote a book with clues about its location. People from all over the globe began their quest for wealth. As I thought about the treasure, I reflected on how we define a “treasure”.

In Illinois, and across the country, challenges abound. If we look at treasure simply as wealth, what a gloomy outlook we may have. At the Serve Illinois Commission, we define “treasure” differently. We see Illinois as having an abundance of treasures. In the past year the state of Illinois has seen our rankings rise to No. 1 in the nation for Cities of Service, service of more than 360 million hours to local communities, and thousands of local families fed and served over the holidays.

As a reader of the Serve Illinois newsletter, I expect you are a volunteer, know a volunteer and support volunteer efforts in your community. What does your treasure chest look like? I imagine it provides you a wealth of joy.

As you read about the volunteer activities in this newsletter, I encourage you to stay in touch with the Serve Illinois Commission between distributions by following us on Facebook and Twitter. Share your stories and join us as we look forward to a year of exciting volunteer opportunities across the state.

Thank you for contributing to the Serve Illinois treasure chest.

Sincerely,

Jill Heise
Chair, Serve Illinois Commission

Illinois Volunteers Provide nearly 360 Million Hours of Service Valued at Over \$8 Billion

Volunteers in Illinois demonstrated their commitment to improving their communities in a variety of ways last year and ranked No. 25 among the 50 states, according to the Volunteering and Civic Life in America (VCLA) report released on Dec. 12, 2012. More than 2.73 million Illinois volunteers served almost 360 million hours, which is valued at more than \$8.1 billion. These numbers rank Illinois No. 1 in volunteer rate among the country's ten largest states.

"Involved citizens do so much to make our communities stronger," said Brandon Bodor, executive director of the Serve Illinois Commission. "We view volunteerism as a vital piece of infrastructure here in Illinois. From education to health to disaster response, service threads through each community and is fundamental to addressing critical issues in the state. We look forward to expanding the awareness of volunteer opportunities so that Illinois can build upon the momentum that we've displayed in this report."

The VCLA data is part of the most comprehensive study of volunteering and civic engagement across the country. The annual report is issued by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) as part of its efforts to expand the reach and impact of America's volunteers, in partnership with the National

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

Council on Citizenship, the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The report shows the national volunteer rate reaching its highest level since 2006. More than 64 million Americans – or

roughly one in four adults – volunteered approximately 8 billion hours, valued at \$171 billion. In addition, two out of three citizens nationally (65.1 percent or almost 144 million citizens) engaged in informal volunteering by doing favors for and helping their neighbors, an increase of 9.5 percentage points from last year.

"Volunteering and civic engagement are the cornerstone of a strong nation," said Wendy Spencer, CEO of CNCS, the agency that administers AmeriCorps and Senior Corps and leads the federal effort on volunteering. "We have a prime example of the importance of people working together in the Northeast, where volunteers have really stepped up to support recovery and relief efforts from Hurricane Sandy. People working together and talking to each other help solve problems and make their communities better places to live and work."

The report also ranks all 50 states and the nation's largest cities and metropolitan areas for their volunteering and civic engagement rates. It has become a useful tool for elected officials, civic leaders and nonprofit executives who recognize the economic impact of an engaged community. These officials and leaders also use the report as a tool to develop strategies to mobilize more Americans in service to address local needs and problems. The complete report can be accessed at www.volunteeringinamerica.gov.



Serve.Illinois.gov

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Belleville AmeriCorps Members Aid in Joplin Relief

Belleville AmeriCorps partnered with Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society members at Southwestern Illinois College in a trip to Joplin, Ill., from Nov. 9-11, 2012. The five Belleville AmeriCorps members served with Rebuild Joplin (an AmeriCorps program) in repairing a house that was damaged by tornados on May 22, 2011. Members sanded drywall used for the walls and ceilings, and repaired holes and cracks in the walls.

Cari Normansell, a Belleville AmeriCorps member, stated, "The project was definitely worthwhile. Bobby, the owner of the house, is now one day closer to being able to move back into his home."

Members noted that Rebuild Joplin was well organized and provided adequate training for the volunteers. In addition to the volunteer experience, members also gained a larger scope of volunteerism by working side by side with other volunteer organizations, including other AmeriCorps members. This project also helped them see firsthand how communities cope with national disasters and the role of volunteers in aiding in the recovery effort.

Rebuild Joplin is a non-profit agency, which partnered with St. Bernard Project, to provide long-term recovery and rebuilding systems. It exists to ensure that Joplin's residential recovery operates at optimal efficiency. Through directed and coordinated services, Rebuild Joplin ensures that tornado-impacted residents have access to affordable and safe housing, delivered through coordinated, efficient and ever-improving construction systems and partnerships.



Belleville AmeriCorps members see firsthand how communities deal with national disasters.



Belleville AmeriCorp members partner with Rebuild Joplin to repair a house that was damaged by tornados.

AmeriCorps Members Spread Holiday Cheer to Thousands of Citizens

- AmeriCorps members at the Fostering Transitions program in Peoria spent the holiday season helping to make the holidays a little brighter for the community.

They collected gently used children's books for underserved preschool programs in the area, and then visited several classrooms where they read stories, made crafts, played games and sang songs that promoted literacy. Each student went home with a book to keep – and a smile on his or her face.

Members also helped prepare holiday meals at a community center in a low-income neighborhood. They helped serve hot, fresh meals to 2,762 people.

Members took an active role in the holiday gift-giving festivities at Children's Home Association of Illinois. They helped receive, organize, wrap and distribute gifts to more than 1,300 local children in need, totaling more than \$52,000 in donated gifts for local families.

Fostering Transitions uses the service experience to prepare disadvantaged individuals for employment. Terms of service offer disadvantaged individuals

valuable life experiences and provide an intensive "employment-like" experience that bridges the gap between life in the system and self-sufficiency. Through service, individuals develop vocational skills and impact Central Illinois by providing academic enrichment and positive youth development to at-risk youth and using service to engage community members in solving community issues.

To learn more about Fostering Transitions and the Children's Home Association of Illinois, contact Julie Siebert at jsiebert@chail.org or visit www.chail.org.



AmeriCorps members help organize, wrap and distribute gifts to more than 1,300 local children in Peoria.

Community Crisis Center a Safe Refuge for Those Impacted by Crisis and Violence

The Community Crisis Center in Elgin is a safe refuge for people experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault or crisis because of economic circumstances. The mission of the Community Crisis Center is to provide safety, hope, advocacy, respite and education for those impacted by crisis and violence.



Programs offered by the Crisis Center include the Domestic Violence Program, Abuse Intervention Service, Sexual Assault Program and the Economic Crisis Program. These programs offer assistance in the form of 24-hour hotlines, counseling, shelter and various others specific to each program. On an average day, the Crisis Center receives approximately 150 requests for help for things such as food, diapers, referrals, shelter, counseling, etc.

If you would you like to volunteer for the Community Crisis Center, contact Deena Duda at (847) 742-4088. Some volunteer activities include preparing dinners; organizing storage; collecting, receiving and sorting donations; fundraising; clerical help; and special events.

If you know someone who may need help, have them contact the Community Crisis Center's 24-hour hotline at (847) 697-2380.

Habitat for Humanity of Sangamon County Seeking Volunteers

- Habitat for Humanity of Sangamon County is a community-driven nonprofit organization that develops working
- partnerships with local businesses, churches, community organizations and other individuals to build simple, decent, and affordable housing for all people in need.

Since its founding in 1989,

- Habitat for Humanity of Sangamon County has built more than 85 houses in the community (including builds in Pawnee, Glenarm and Grandview as well as in Springfield) while providing
- shelter for more than 300 individuals.



- Volunteer needs include helping with reception, filing, meeting prep, etc. by either covering a weekly morning or afternoon shift. Volunteers are also needed to assist with the ReStore, which sells donated construction and home items at a discount. Other volunteer opportunities include helping with construction planning, tool management and/or building.

- New volunteer orientation classes are held each month. Visit www.habitatsangamon.com or call Ryan Mobley, Volunteer Manager, at (217)523-2710, ext. 14 for more information.

3 Illinois Colleges Among Top Contributors in Peace Corps Volunteers

Three Illinois colleges are among the top schools in the nation for sending volunteers to work with the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps announced its annual rankings February 5, 2013.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign landed among the top volunteer producers for the 13th year in a row. The university has 54 graduates currently serving in the Peace Corps, ranking 23rd in the country. It's the 7th highest ranked all-time, with 1,973 alums serving since 1961.

Loyola and Northwestern universities tied at number 18, with each having 23 alumni currently in the field. There are more than 8,000 Peace Corps volunteers working in 76 host countries.

Graduating college students have until Feb. 28 to apply for remaining openings in 2013 and to be considered for 2014.



Volunteers Honor Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through Service

Gov. Pat Quinn designated Jan. 21, 2013, as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in Illinois, and urged citizens to honor the memory of Dr. King by participating in the King Day of Service and finding ways to give back to their communities on this day and throughout the year.

While many individuals spent the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday relaxing, thousands of volunteers statewide engaged in service projects to honor the legacy and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Quinn joined the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Serve Illinois Commission in encouraging Illinois citizens to take part in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, which had a theme of “A Day On, Not a Day Off.”



“Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us that everyone can be great because everyone can serve,” Brandon Bodor said. “Each and every one of us has something valuable to contribute to make our communities, our state, and our country a better place, and we at Serve Illinois strives to make all our residents internalize and act on Dr. King’s message.”

Many AmeriCorps programs throughout Illinois also engaged their members in the Day of Service. AmeriCorps East Saint Louis members spent the day serving meals at Cosgrove’s Soup Kitchen, and members of the Belleville AmeriCorps programs took time to visit with local retirees at the First Christian and St. Matthew churches. The AmeriCorps members of the ABC AmeriCorps program of Sauk Valley Community College took turns covering the weekend shifts at the Twin City Pads Shelter in Sterling. Meanwhile, the Schuler Scholar Program members cleaned, organized, painted, and made minor repairs to an elementary school on the north side of Chicago.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service is an event that encourages all volunteers, as well as the individuals they serve, to remember the importance of diversity, teamwork and shared community. “Volunteerism is a great way to honor Dr. King, his legacy and his vision,” said DHS Secretary Michelle R. B. Saddler. “I am proud and grateful to our community volunteers in our local DHS offices throughout the state.”



Children paint a banner to honor MLK at the Belleville AmeriCorps service project.



Coats were collected by members of Schuler Scholar Program.



Members of ICIRR participate in a day of service.

Find or Post
a Volunteer
Opportunity
Today!

Visit Serve.Illinois.gov



In addition to the searchable portal of more than 140,000 volunteer opportunities statewide, Serve.Illinois.gov hosts a wide variety of volunteer resources:

- Ability to Post Volunteer Opportunities
- Statewide Volunteer Management Network Conference & Meeting Information
- National Service Program Information (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps & Learn and Serve America)
- Volunteerism Research & Volunteerism Web Links
- Featured Volunteer Stories
- Serve Illinois Calendar of Events

We want to hear from you!

If your agency is currently preparing for upcoming volunteerism or national service events, or if you have recently completed an event and would like to share your story, we want to hear from you. For newsletter or website publication consideration, please send information to dhs.serveillinois@illinois.gov. Web links, photos accompanying a story and professional development resources are also encouraged.

Training and Professional Development

Save the Date

2013 Volunteerism Conferences



*Central Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
June 13, 2013 – Springfield, IL*

*Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration:
August 2013 – Chicago, IL www.icova.info*



*Southern Illinois Volunteerism Conference:
September 2013 – Belleville, IL www.sivc.net*

*Northwest Illinois / MVDOVIA Volunteerism
Conference: October 18, 2013 – Moline, IL
www.nwivc.net*



THANK YOU

The Serve Illinois Commission would like to thank Brad Phipps for the time and effort he has contributed to the Commission in the last several months. Brad, an Associate at DLA Piper, LLP in Chicago, has

provided countless hours in pro-bono legal services to the Commission's Resource Development Committee as it seeks to establish a non-profit arm to further the work of Serve Illinois. Thanks, Brad, for your service!



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“Building Stronger Communities Through Service”

Upcoming Days of Service

March 9-17, 2013

AmeriCorps Week

www.americorpsweek.gov

March 31, 2013

César Chávez Day of Service

www.chavezfoundation.org

April 21-27, 2013

National Volunteer Week

www.handsonnetwork.org

May 6-10, 2013

Senior Corps Week

www.seniorcorps.gov



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*Illinois AmeriCorps Disability
Outreach Project: Meeting the
needs for AmeriCorps Members
of all backgrounds and abilities.*

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